2: Covarrubias R-5 (1930-1933) 1938
OF7 Bali OF7

expense involved in entertaining the many guests with a banquet has made the bull races rare nowadays, but they are still to be seen in North Bali, where there are many rich peasants. Besides the amusement derived from the race, the chance for gambling, and the utilitarian ploughing of the field, the feast is considered a good investment, because the gods, pleased by the gay and colourful spectacle, are expected to repay the donor with a plentiful harvest.

The race is held in a flooded ricefield between rival teams of specially trained bulls. The oxen are crowned with ornaments of tooled gilt leather, and silk banners decorate their yokes. Enormous wooden bells, often three feet across, are attached to their necks. Bets are placed as the contending teams are lined up with their drivers standing on the rakes to which the bulls are hitched. At a signal from the referee, they are off with a speed one does not usually associate with ploughing oxen. The yelling drivers, on the rakes that glide along the mud, whip and entice the bulls to run across the field, always with an elegant gait. Their heads are raised high, forced up by the great thumping bells, giving them an added elegance. However fast they may run, the referee gives his decision not to the fastest, but to the team with the most stately bearing.

It is typical of the Balinese to place style before mere physical speed.

When the field is prepared, the mother-seed, which has been picked from the largest and most beautiful ears, is soaked for two days and two nights, then spread on a mat and sprinkled with water until the germ breaks through. A nursery plot is prepared in a corner of the field to receive the young sprouts, which must be planted on a propitious day set by the religious calendar. They remain in the nursery for about two months; then when they have developed enough, they are pulled out, washed, pruned, tied in bunches, and exposed to the air for one night. By this time the sawas are clean and ready to receive the young plants; offerings (*sudjuk*) to Dewi Sri are made again and the owner of the sawa,

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OF7 Bali OF7

783 then the Lord of Hell, Yama, sweeps Hades of devils, which fall
796 on Bali, making it imperative that the whole of the island be purified.

There is great excitement all over Bali at this time, and on
796 the days before *nyepí* everybody is busy erecting altars for the offerings and scaffolds for the priests at the village crossroads. Since no cooking is allowed on *nyepí* day, the food for the next day is prepared and there are *melis* processions all over Bali to take the gods to the sea for their symbolical bath. The celebration proper extends over a period of two days: the *metjaru*, the great purification offering, and *nyepí*, the day of silence. On
541 the first day the Government allows unrestricted gambling and
[525] cockfighting, an essential part of the ceremony, because the land is cured by spilling blood over impure earth.

In Den Pasar round after round was fought all morning; crowds of men gathered in the meeting hall of every *bandjar*, each bringing his favourite fighting cock in a curious satchel of fresh coconut leaves, handle and all, woven over the cock's body, its tail left sticking out so as not to damage the feathers. Each satchel was cut open and the cocks presented to the audience to announce the matches. The betting began; excited enthusiasts waved strings of *kepengs* and silver *ringgit* and yelled at each other. A vicious steel blade five inches long and sharp as a razor was attached to the right foot of each cock in place of the natural spur, which was cut off. When both contenders were ready and the bets had been placed, the referee and the time-keeper went to their places and gave the signal to start, beating a small gong.

The two cocks, held by their owners, were brought to the middle of the arena, provoked against each other and released. The audience became tense, and the cocks attacked each other with such fury that the eye could not follow them; there were only flashes of the polished steel of the spurs in the cloud of flying feathers. Each round lasted only a few seconds; suddenly the two cocks stopped and stood motionless in front of each

3: Belo E-5 (1931-1939) 1953 OF7 Bali OF7

not fight. Even the priest must obey this regulation. The cockfight is a necessary adjunct of the *odalan*, "in order that blood may be spilled on the ground" (*laboeh getih*), but it is also a fascinating sport for the men. Not only the immediate members of the *bandjar* attend, but cock-fanciers and habitual gamblers from neighboring villages are attracted. They swell the crowd and make the occasion a gayer one. Squatting on their haunches, exciting their cocks, taking hold of and testing the strength of possible opponents for their entries, making up matches, offering bets, and watching with bated breath the all too rapid playing out of the contests, the men passed the hours until sundown. When there was no longer sufficient light, they wended their way home again, weary but happy. Most of them — for this is not a village of wealthy people — had won or lost amounts ranging from ten cents to about five guilders.

9:00 p. m. Refreshment and dancing (*Méndèt*): On this day, it is customary to bring the individual gift offerings (*matoeran*) to the gods. Not all of the temple members had found time to prepare and to bring their gifts on the day of the *odalan*. They are under no compulsion to bring them on a certain day, any day will do except the *paing odalan*, the second day following the *odalan*. And so on this evening there was again to be seen a stream of women and young girls passing in and out of the temple gate bearing offerings.

That night, the orchestra players and the women who dance *méndèt* assembled in the temple about nine o'clock. It began to rain. The people huddled under the roofs of the various *balés*, waiting for the rain to stop. But it did not stop, and soon the earthen floor of the temple court was turned into one big puddle of muddy water. About eleven, they decided that it was no use to wait any longer, and they gave up the idea of performing the dance.

Offerings (*Péndètan*): The *péndètan* offerings were accordingly set out upon a stand, the various sets intended for each shrine, and the whole lot offered at one time to "all the gods" (*betara sami*). Only the priest, and a detachment of men from the *bandjar* whose turn it was to guard (*mekemit*) the temple, remained through this night, and everyone else went home.

Second Day (Paing odalan)

a. m. Awakening; dressing the gods; fresh offerings (*Tetangi*; *ngiasin betara*; *penganjaran*): The next day was much like the last. The same rituals were performed, the same fresh offerings prepared. The chief difference was that all the members did not have to come for the sharing of offerings, and that there was no bringing of individual gifts to the gods. The people say that they do not bring gifts because the gods have gone

[101 cont.]
000 people during the first year of marriage.
621 [102] The villagers also have financial duties; they must
651 pay for the dèsa festivals and ceremonies through the patoeroenan a tax payable in money. To provide the dèsa treasury with money

[142 291]

Balinese Family Group
Photo. Kolonial Instituut, Amsterdam. Coll. Aug. de Wit.

[541 525] cock-fighting also is organized, and a portion of the betting money exacted.

623 Village Meetings. These usually take place once a month
[805] (the Balinese month has 35 days), in the village temple at full moon and in the temple of the dead at new moon, or, in the old-fashioned dèsa, in the balé-agoeng erected in the forecourt of the
[624] village temple. The evening before the meeting the messengers of the klian summon the villagers on the signal block.